

Featured Artifact: La Tierra Nueva en Aztlán

<http://historyexplorer.americanhistory.si.edu/resource/?key=2431>

Era 9: Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)



Look at the artifact presented to you. In a few sentences, respond to the following questions:

Describe: Objectively describe the artifact. What do you think it is made of? What does it look like? Does it look old or new? Is it intact, or is it damaged in some way?

Analyze: When, where or how do you think this item was used? What kind of person may have created or used this item? What significance do you think the object held, either for the creator or the user? Do you see words or images on the artifact that connect it to others (besides the creator and user)?

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Share your conclusions with a partner, then discuss the following:

Evaluate : Justify why you came to those conclusions about the artifact. What further questions do you have about the object? Of those questions, which could you solve by observing the object in person and which would you need to solve with research?

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Background Information

The evolving civil rights movement of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s revolutionized the consciousness of young people across the United States. As in African American communities, a new sense of mobilization spread among Mexican Americans. Many adopted a more political identity—*chicano* and *chicana*—and explored their history, which was omitted from school textbooks. The Chicano movement sought to remedy the injustices experienced by many Mexican Americans, from substandard education and housing to working conditions. Many symbols and ideas of the Chicano movement were taken from the pre-Hispanic past, especially Aztec history. *Aztlán*, the original homeland in the Aztec migration stories, has an important place in Chicano mythology. As a symbolic reclamation of their place in American history, Chicanos locate Aztlán in the Southwest United States, in the area conquered during the Mexican-American War. The image shown here, by Manuel Moya, is an ink drawing done on a handkerchief known as a *pañño*. Paños are graphic art works drawn on handkerchiefs by Chicano prisoners in California, Texas, and the Southwest. Titled, *La Tierra Nueva en Aztlán*, or *The New Land in Aztlán*, it combines the images of the Aztec past with a Pancho Villa-like figure from the Mexican Revolution.

After reading and considering the background information, compose a response to the following:

Analyze: Address the following object-specific questions:

- How do you think the symbols represent the Chicano movement?
- How does this artwork blend the old and new? Why is it important to represent both?

Synthesize: What does this object tell us about the era in which it was created, or the American experience as a whole? How would you describe the social, economic, or political climate of America during this time? What connections can you make between this object and other things that you have seen, read, or experienced?

Analyze: Address the following era-specific questions:

- How did the post-WWII era change politics, society, and economics in the United States?